



## Wisconsin Department of Transportation

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January 2005

### THE WISCONSIN DOT IN 2004: MOVING THE STATE'S ECONOMY FORWARD

With the assistance of its many public and private partners, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) moved forward on a host of transportation projects and initiatives in 2004 focused on enhancing public safety and encouraging economic growth. Governor Jim Doyle's comprehensive "Grow Wisconsin" plan calls for strategic investments in the statewide transportation network to promote economic development. Towards that goal, work began this year to reconstruct the Marquette Interchange in Milwaukee – a four-year, \$810 million effort that will be the largest single transportation project the state has ever undertaken. In addition, some \$662 million was invested in 540 bridge and highway construction and maintenance projects throughout the state.

Along with infrastructure improvements, the year 2004 was also highlighted by several positive developments in the realm of traffic safety – developments that likely contributed to the year's significant drop in traffic fatalities:

**0.08 law saving lives.** The year 2004 marked the first full year of implementation for a new Wisconsin law that sets the prohibited blood alcohol concentration for first and second offense drivers at 0.08. A preliminary analysis shows that during the 12-month period after the 0.08 law took effect on September 30, 2003, alcohol-related crashes, injuries and fatalities dropped significantly (50 fewer alcohol-related deaths and 448 fewer injuries compared to the same previous 12-month period).

**Seat belt use at all-time high.** A four-week, statewide survey conducted in mid-2004 discovered that 72.4% of front-seat occupants in Wisconsin motor vehicles wear their safety belts – the highest safety belt usage rate ever observed in Wisconsin and 2.6% higher than the 69.8% seat belt use figure from 2003. It's estimated that every percentage point increase in safety belt usage saves six lives per year. However, the survey continues to reveal that teenage drivers and passengers are still among the least likely to buckle up.

**GDL reducing teen crashes.** On a more positive note for young drivers, an analysis of Wisconsin's Graduated Driver License (GDL) law shows that during its first full three years of implementation, the GDL law is having its intended effect of reducing the number of fatalities and crashes among teen drivers. The analysis revealed that 18% fewer 16-year-old drivers were involved in fatal crashes from 2001 through 2003 compared to the three-year period prior to implementation of GDL.

**Drop in motorcycle fatalities.** Following the 100 motorcyclist fatalities that occurred in the state in 2003, a national motorcycling safety summit was held in Wisconsin in February 2004. The summit gathered law enforcement, transportation safety and motorcycle rider education groups to develop a comprehensive strategy to enhance motorcycle safety efforts. During 2004, motorcycle fatalities dropped 20% in Wisconsin - from 100 to 80. Wisconsin State Patrol troopers and Bureau of Transportation Safety staff provided riding demonstrations and information at motorcycle events throughout the state. In addition, over 1,100 people received training through the basic motorcycle riding course in 2004.

Following an especially deadly year in 2003 when a total of 836 motorists died along Wisconsin roadways, the state's preliminary fatality total for 2004 stands at 785 – below the five-year average. Still, WisDOT continues to emphasize the need for all motorists to obey speed limits and other traffic laws, wear safety belts, and drive sober.

### **Making Investments to Grow Wisconsin**

Targeted investments to maintain and improve transportation infrastructure help ensure the continued safe and efficient movement of both travelers and commerce. Key highway-related construction projects during 2004 included:

- Work began on a \$66.5 million project to expand US 141 from WIS 22 in Oconto County to WIS 64 in Marinette County.
- A \$31 million bridge project over the Mississippi River in downtown La Crosse was completed, creating a new four-lane crossing of US 14/61/WIS 16. The new bridge enhances safety and provides more efficient access to destinations in Wisconsin and Minnesota for over 19,000 vehicles daily.
- A ribbon-cutting event was held to celebrate completion of an \$8.1 million project to relocate a 3.3-mile segment of US 8 in Rhinelander.
- Governor Jim Doyle convened an event in Port Wing, Wisconsin, to recognize the completion of a \$4.8 million effort to improve a 21-mile section of WIS 13.

Other investments in Wisconsin's multi-modal transportation system during 2004 included:

- WisDOT administered 80 airport improvement projects at public use airports throughout the state representing a federal, state and local investment totaling some \$100 million. Projects range from major runway or terminal construction to the replacement of navigational beacons – all in support of Wisconsin's aviation industry that pumps an estimated \$2.1 billion into the state's economy each year.
- Governor Doyle approved over \$12.1 million in awards to support freight rail-related facilities and services:

- This includes \$7 million in revolving loans issued through the Freight Railroad Infrastructure Improvement Program to help seven businesses complete rail-related improvements such as rail spurs, along with grain and fertilizer storage facilities.
- Three more awards totaling \$5.1 million were distributed through the Freight Railroad Preservation Program. These grants cover up to 80% of the costs of projects designed to preserve rail service or rehabilitate fixed-facilities on publicly-owned rail lines.
- To assist passenger rail, the state continues to partner with the state of Illinois to support Amtrak's Hiawatha service between Milwaukee and Chicago. Ridership on the route continues to grow, reaching a record total of 470,186 in 2004. In early 2005, WisDOT expects to open a new rail station at General Mitchell International Airport, and to proceed with renovation of the downtown Milwaukee Amtrak station.
- Governor Doyle approved four Harbor Assistance Program grants totaling \$3.3 million. This included a \$1.2 million grant for the Port of Sturgeon Bay, a \$1.1 million award for the Port of Superior, an \$800,000 grant to support the Lake Express ferry service at the Port of Milwaukee, and a \$249,956 award to Brown County to assist with improvements to U.S. Oil's facility along the Fox River in Green Bay.
- In September of 2004, Governor Doyle announced nearly \$9 million in Transportation Enhancement grants. WisDOT distributes the federal dollars to municipalities to help complete bicycle and pedestrian-related projects, improvements to historic transportation structures, and downtown streetscaping efforts. The grants typically cover 80% of a project's cost, with local communities providing a 20% match.
- The Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) program provides grants to local sponsors to support transportation improvements that create or retain jobs. During 2004, WisDOT administered eight TEA grants totaling over \$3 million that created or retained some 2,369 jobs. The projects typically involve road or rail improvements for communities to assist business expansion, and are expected to generate over \$65 million in average yearly wage increases and over \$54 million in tax revenues for the state.

### **Supporting our urban areas**

The Governor's "Grow Wisconsin" plan provides special emphasis to support the state's urban communities:

- Work officially began on the Marquette Interchange Project to reconstruct the busy crossroads of I-43, I-94 and I-794 in downtown Milwaukee. The \$810 million project is proceeding on time and on budget, with extensive efforts to inform the public through Get Around Guides, media ads and the mchange.org Web site. In 2004, contracts were awarded for a variety of preliminary work, along with two major contracts for the North Leg and the West Leg.

- As part of Governor Doyle's commitment to the community, WisDOT has been highly successful in creating opportunities for disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) firms on the Marquette Interchange Project. For nine construction contracts in 2004 totaling almost \$145 million, WisDOT awarded almost \$37 million to DBE contractors and sub-contractors, a 25% share. Three DBE firms earned the prime bid on contracts in 2004. WisDOT also continues its minority and women labor development, with over 70 people graduating from the M-Trans labor-training program in 2004.
- In April of 2004, Governor Doyle announced over \$2.5 million in state funds to help complete 11 city and village street projects throughout the state. The funds, administered through WisDOT's Municipal Street Improvement Program – Discretionary, assist with high-cost city and village improvement projects totaling \$250,000 or more in total eligible costs.
- A performance analysis unveiled in 2004 showed that 67 of Wisconsin's 68 public transit systems are in compliance with statutorily-mandated cost-efficiency standards. State support for public transit totals about \$99 million annually to cover an average of 40% of a system's operating costs. Investments in public transit and specialized transit services supports some 8,250 jobs and generates over \$360 million in economic output in Wisconsin each year.

#### **Other statewide investments**

WisDOT oversees improvements in municipalities both large and small:

- In March of 2004, Governor Doyle announced approval of \$10.5 million in state funds to help complete 38 county highway projects throughout the state. The funds, administered through WisDOT's County Highway Improvement Program – Discretionary, complete roadway reconstruction work or major re-surfacing designed to last at least 10 years.
- In addition, Governor Doyle announced \$1.7 million in state funds to help complete 11 town road improvement projects through the Town Road Improvement Program – Discretionary. The program assists with high-cost town road improvement projects totaling \$100,000 or more in overall project costs.
- A total of 67 grants worth \$1.8 million were announced in August of 2004 through the Traffic Signing and Marking Enhancement Program that was part of the 0.08 blood alcohol legislation. The awards to municipalities are being used to enhance the visibility of traffic signs and other roadway markings to assist older drivers and pedestrians.
- In May of 2004, the Governor announced \$3.4 million in state and federal grants to assist smaller communities purchase specialized transit service vehicles. The funds, distributed through WisDOT's Elderly and Disabled Transportation Capital Assistance Program, help procure specialized vehicles to meet the daily mobility needs of elderly and disabled individuals.

## **Meeting the needs of our customers**

WisDOT staff, working in conjunction with other public and private groups, accommodates the mobility needs of virtually every traveler in the state. The department's "customers" include businesses, communities, motorists and others. During 2004, the agency took many steps to enhance and improve customer service:

- During December of 2004, WisDOT's Division of Motor Vehicles completed installation of a modernized computer network designed to be more "user friendly" for DMV customers. Vehicle registration and driver licensing records were merged into a single database saving time and money when accessing records. Modern programming systems were installed creating even more opportunities for customers to conduct business online.
- DMV and staff from the Division of Business Management completed work on critical components of the Oversize/Overweight Automation project that automates the truck permitting process, dramatically reducing the time required for motor carriers to obtain the necessary permits to operate large vehicles on Wisconsin highways. An Automated Routing System developed into the Web-based system in 2004 allows carriers to select and submit their own routes as part of their permit request and allows completion of many permits without manual intervention.
- With an average of over 18 million hits per month, WisDOT's Web site helps over 176,000 on-line monthly visitors find transportation information. Following a complete redesign of the site in 2002 and a Usability Study in 2003, WisDOT has been incorporating recommendations and further refining the department's Web site.
- The State Patrol continued improvements to its Mobile Data Communications Network (MDCN) that is shared with 150 other local, state, and federal agencies, including DNR.

## **WisDOT's responsibilities**

The agency manages a multi-modal transportation system that allows over three million workers to commute to work, handles over \$270 billion of freight and directly supports the state's \$11.4 billion tourism industry:

- Wisconsin's transportation network includes: some 112,000 miles of federal, state and county highways, town roads and municipal streets; about 6,000 miles of railway; 134 public use airports; 68 public transit systems; 15 ports; and numerous bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the state.
- The department's Division of Motor Vehicles keeps track of nearly 5.2 million registered vehicles and over 3.9 million licensed drivers while handling over 11.7 million transactions each year.
- The Wisconsin State Patrol promotes highway safety by enforcing traffic laws, assisting stranded motorists and inspecting commercial trucks, ambulances and school buses.

- WisDOT works directly with some 1,900 local governmental units in the state. This includes the distribution of General Transportation Aids, Connecting Highway Aids, County Forest Road Aids, Expressway Policing Aids and transit aids.
- Meanwhile, utilization of Wisconsin's transportation system continues to grow. Vehicle miles traveled – a commonly used measure of highway use and demand – currently stands at about 59.6 billion miles per year and continues to increase.

### **Strengthening partnerships**

In order to meet its many responsibilities, WisDOT works closely with a variety of “partners” at the federal, state and local levels including transportation planning organizations, consultants, contractors and a variety of other public and private agencies:

- During the summer of 2004, a Professional Golf Association (PGA) Championship at Whistling Straits showcased Wisconsin to a worldwide golfing audience. Collaborating with local law enforcement, public safety agencies and PGA officials, WisDOT and the State Patrol executed a traffic plan to safely and efficiently move an additional 25,000 cars and 500 buses per day to and from the remote Whistling Straits course. Approximately 50 State Patrol officers were involved in controlling and directing traffic each day of the tournament. The overall success of the PGA event enhances the likelihood of Wisconsin hosting another such major tournament. An economic impact study determined the event pumped an estimated \$76 million into Wisconsin's economy.
- The department continues to work closely with federal, state and local officials in an effort to preserve freight rail service along a 37-mile railroad corridor between Saukville and Kiel. After the federal Surface Transportation Board approved Wisconsin Central Ltd.'s (now owned by Canadian National Railway Co). application to abandon the rail corridor, the state stepped forward to purchase the line. WisDOT conducted an economic impact study that revealed the seven businesses currently using rail service along the line provide 145 jobs with an estimated annual payroll of \$5.8 million.
- The department continues significant public outreach activities to support development of the Connections 2030 long-range transportation plan. During 2004, WisDOT conducted a statewide survey of over 1,000 state residents who were asked to indicate their key issues and concerns relative to Wisconsin's overall transportation system. In addition, WisDOT staff met with nearly 40 stakeholder groups (including health organizations and land use groups) and met with municipal planning, public works and transit staff in 15 large cities around the state to solicit their input into the plan.
- WisDOT continued its partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, the federal government and local transit providers through the Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP). In 2004, the partners invested \$4.7 million in enhanced public transit services to connect low-income workers to jobs.

- WisDOT has been meeting with representatives from the 11 Native American tribes in Wisconsin to identify local program funding levels, program timelines, requirements, and contacts. The information helps tribes understand program eligibility issues and may assist tribes in applying for local program funds.
- The Rustic Roads program represents one of Wisconsin's most successful and longest-lasting state/local partnerships. To commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the program and designation of the 100<sup>th</sup> Rustic Road, Wisconsin First Lady Jessica Doyle is helping WisDOT and the Department of Tourism sponsor the first-of-its-kind Rustic Roads Photo Contest. Amateur photographers are asked to provide Rustic Roads photos to the local government with jurisdiction over the road. The Rustic Roads Board will then select winners in six photo categories. Wisconsin's officially designated 100<sup>th</sup> Rustic Road is a 13-mile route north of Mercer that also represents the first Rustic Road in Iron County.

WisDOT's many accomplishments during 2004 are a direct reflection of the agency's dedicated and professional staff:

- Because of its commitment to innovation and efficiency, WisDOT was named state "Agency of the Year" in 2004 for the second straight year. Several WisDOT employees received awards from the Wisconsin Employee Suggestion Program for their time and money-saving ideas.
- The U.S. Department of Commerce Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) recognized WisDOT Deputy Secretary Ruben Anthony Jr. for his efforts to promote minority businesses through transportation projects. Anthony received the MBDA's Regional Director's Legacy Award for Public Service and the federal agency's National Award.
- In mid-July, 2004, the heroic actions of State Patrol Trooper Les Boldt of Abrams generated national media attention. A video camera in Boldt's squad car recorded how the trooper risked his own life to save a suicidal woman attempting to jump off a Green Bay bridge. Trooper Boldt received a Meritorious Service Award for his actions.
- Donna Brown, with WisDOT's Waukesha District Office was named Women's Transportation Seminar Woman of the Year. The award honors an outstanding female role model who has contributed to the advancement of women and minorities in transportation.

The year 2004 and beyond will see new challenges and opportunities for transportation in Wisconsin. WisDOT will continue to be a leader in meeting these challenges and setting the direction for a strong, safe and efficient transportation system that can meet the needs of a growing state of Wisconsin.

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